

# IN SCIENCE FIELDS

## SEISMOLOGY

## Earthquake Shook Mexico During Recent Eclipse

**J**UST when the eclipse of the sun was deepest black on Tuesday the inhabitants of Chiapas in lower Mexico had the added experience of feeling an earthquake. This was revealed by the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in decoding messages forwarded by Science Service from seismological stations throughout the United States and Canada.

There was no connection, scientifically, between the two events but Mexicans who already may have been fearful of the partial blacking of the sun were put in added terror by the earth tremor.

The shock, termed "moderately" strong, occurred at 5:29.8 p. m., eastern standard time, and had its epicenter near the town of Chiapas in lower Mexico near the Guatemala boundary. The shock was of the deep focus type.

Stations reporting the quake included: Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.; Canisius College, Buffalo, N. Y.; U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Tucson, Ariz.; Meteorological Observatory, Victoria, B. C.; Williams College Observatory, Williamstown, Mass., and the private seismological station of Mrs. M. M. Seeburger, Des Moines, Iowa.

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## PHYSIOLOGY

## Quick Stepping Saves Fire-Walkers' Feet

**F**IRE-walkers of India, who tread on live coals without injury to their bare feet, owe their immunity simply to the fact that they take very quick steps—and not too many of them—rather than to any quasi-magically induced mental state.

This has been demonstrated by experiments under the direction of Harry Price, honorary secretary of the University of London Council for Physical Investigation.

When the professional fire-walker, one Ahmed Hussain, stepped from end to end of an ember-filled trench 12 feet long in one and one-third seconds, his

feet were unaffected by the fire. Three amateur volunteers tried following his lead on the second dash, and received slight but undoubted burns.

Then a second trench was prepared, 20 feet long and somewhat hotter than the first. When Ahmed Hussain walked through this more severe ordeal, he came out with several blisters on one foot and a decided redness on the other.

Evidently therefore getting through fire without scorching your soles is a matter of "puttin' 'em down and pickin' 'em up"—with accent on very quickly picking them up.

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## CONCHOLOGY

## W.P.A. Workers Trace Story of Shell Uses

**S**EASHELLS had monetary importance long before smooth-talking carnival "operators" found how effective three of them could be when combined with a deftly manipulated rolling pea. Ages before man learned about gold and silver his coins were shells: the pierced tiny disks that formed the wampum of our own Indians, the dentalia or tooth-shells of the West, the smooth-beautiful cowries that formed the currency of a large part of the world's warm-water coasts.

To record the monetary and other uses of shells throughout the world in an exhibit of permanent educational value is the unique undertaking of a group of W.P.A. workers in the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans, under the direction of Dr. H. J. Boekelman of the Department of Middle American Research, Tulane University.

Shells had a multitude of uses, among races that had not yet learned the use of metal. They came ready made as a whole series of utensils and tools, some of which are still evident in traditional patterns used in other materials. The spoon in every sugarbowl is still called a sugar "shell", and often has its bowl wrought in a scallop-shell pattern. The first garden hoes were large clam or mussel shells fitted with stick handles.

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## AGRICULTURE

## Gold in "Them Hills" Of Sugarcane Waste

**"T**HAR'S Gold in them thar hills" of wasted sugarcane tops and leaves that at harvest time clutter the fields of Louisiana, as well as the rest of the sugar-producing world. Wealth, not waste, should be the significance of these great mounds of trash, declares William L. Owen, consulting bacteriologist of Baton Rouge.

The "pay juice" of sugarcane, which yields the high-grade sugars of the market, is concentrated in the lower part of the stalk. Leaves and top have little of it and the cutters lop off and leave them lying in the fields. Their only economic use at present is as fuel under the mill boilers—and that is so wasteful that it can hardly be called economic.

To make his argument more vivid, Mr. Owen did a little "end-to-end" figuring. The cane trash wasted annually in the state of Louisiana alone, he said, would make a mound a quarter-mile in area and 300 feet high; it would yield juice enough to make a lake a mile square and a foot deep; the nitrates lost when it is burned represent the equivalent of 28,000 tons of Chili saltpeter.

The answer, as Mr. Owen sees it, is to express this non-commercial juice, which is rich in fermentable sugars, and convert it into alcohol for blending with gasoline as a motor fuel. Corn and other grains are proposed for this use in the nation's Midwestern "breadbasket"; he would extend the idea to include the "sugarbowl."

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## ZOOLOGY

## Guereza Monkeys Source Of Fashionable Fur

See Front Cover

**G**UEREZA monkeys, that live in the forests of Ethiopia, supply most of the fashionable long monkey fur that trims women's garments. In this group, recently mounted for the Field Museum of Natural History, the way that the animals themselves wear their fur as a natural cape is clearly shown.

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